



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

15 December 1983

Recent Trends in the Horn of Africa

This memorandum was prepared by CIA analysts at the request of the NIO/AF for participants attending the 20 December 1983 Interdepartmental Group meeting on NSDD-57. It reviews the current situation in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan in response to specific questions from the Department of State and is intended to update a Memorandum to Holders of SNIE 76-81, Trends in the Horn of Africa, 27 September 1983.

* * *

SomaliaInternal Security

The Siad regime continues to be challenged by a complex array of interrelated problems: intertribal tensions which engender a basic mistrust of government; tribally based insurgencies supported by Ethiopia and Libya; and growing frustration within the military over the continuing weakening of its position relative to Ethiopia. Siad's position has

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Horn of Africa Branch, Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with a contribution [redacted] Egypt-Sudan Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAS. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division [redacted]

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eroded over the past three years, but he retains considerable skill and cunning in dividing, co-opting, or suppressing his opponents while entrenching his trusted supporters in positions of power. Siad's tactics have enabled him to control civil unrest fairly effectively and to prevent the formation of opposition cliques with significant power in the political and military spheres. In addition, he has benefitted from deep-seated Somali tribalism which not only has divided his opposition but has ensured him support from certain clans.

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In our judgment, the disarmament campaigns will have little long-term impact on intertribal tensions and may, in fact, exacerbate tribal disgruntlement with Siad as they fail to address the root causes of the disputes. Moreover, the tribes will have little difficulty obtaining replacement arms from Ethiopia, Somali insurgents, or sympathetic elements in the Somali military. [REDACTED]

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Tribal tensions pose a continuing threat to internal security. The disputes, and efforts to contain them, will increasingly divert the attention of the Army to domestic issues and undermine military morale. Moreover, the US Embassy has attributed a decline in law and order to the diversion of police units from their normal duties to dealing with tribal violence. [REDACTED]

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Despite his current emphasis on a forceful approach to the chronic tribal problems, Siad has not completely abandoned more conciliatory tactics. During a trip to the North in early December, Siad announced amnesty plans for 800 Issaks, including political prisoners. This move could mollify disgruntled Issaks temporarily, but Siad's failure to follow through on such promises in the past--most recently during a northern trip in February 1983--increased tribal mistrust in the long run. [REDACTED]

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We believe that the likely reemergence of Siad's tactics of favoritism toward his own Marehan and allied tribes and repression of opposing factions will worsen tribal mistrust of his regime. We believe it unlikely that Siad will be willing to make significant political concessions to opposing clans and he will use increasingly harsher means to retain power. In our judgment, tribal problems are eroding Siad's support, but are not an immediate threat to his regime. Although Siad is losing the backing of some traditional supporters, intertribal distrust--fostered in part by Siad--will help prevent the formation of a significant opposition coalition in the political sphere or in the military. [REDACTED]

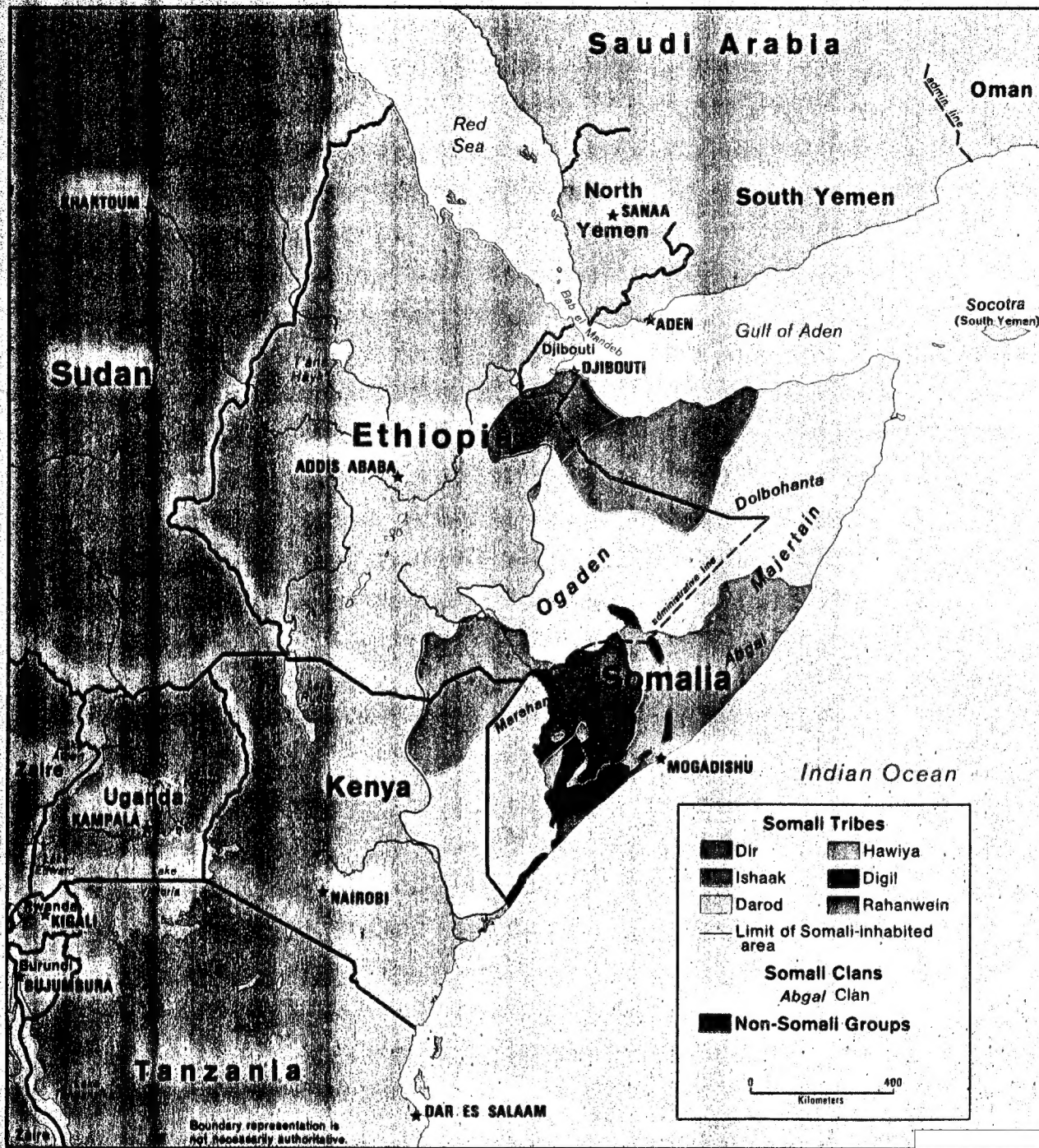
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Traditional tribal disputes, in our judgment, will become increasingly intermingled with politically based dissident activity. Ethiopian- and Libyan-backed dissident groups will continue to have some success in exploiting existing clan rivalries to undermine Siad's support base, in focusing criticism on the regime, and in disrupting internal security. [REDACTED]

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Somali Insurgencies. Opposition to Siad's internal policies is reflected in anti-regime activity by the Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF) and the Somali National Movement (SNM). These groups continue to be troublesome to Siad, but they have not conducted any significant

Tribes and Major Clans of the Somali Nation



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military operations since September. Supported by Ethiopia and Libya, the Majertain-dominated SDSF harrasses security forces in the central region but remains unable to expand the base of its popular support to other tribes because of tribal rivalries and the SDSF's identification with the Ethiopians. _____

The largely Issak SNM continues, with Ethiopian backing, to exploit long-standing northern distrust of Siad and to stir up anti-government violence. The SNM has had some recent success in expanding its links to other clans, particularly elements of the Hawiya--one of the main pillars of the Siad regime--who are becoming increasingly unhappy with the regime's favoritism toward the Marehans. _____

We believe, however, that neither the SDSF nor the SNM poses a serious threat to Siad over the near term. Chronic intertribal mistrust precludes an effective, lasting Issak-Hawiya coalition within the SNM. Both insurgent groups have resisted Ethiopian and Libyan urgings to merge, again because of mutual mistrust. Siad, moreover, has had some success in undermining the SDSF through an effective amnesty campaign which offers economic rewards and government jobs as an inducement to potential defectors. _____

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Military Discontent. The Somali military has experienced a variety of frustrations this year: the continuing Ethiopian occupation of two border towns since mid-1982; two humiliating defeats at the hands of Ethiopian-backed dissidents near the central sector border in mid-1983; and frequent violent confrontations with armed tribal groups. Senior military advisers increasingly cite their need for additional heavy weapons, especially modern armor, to expel the Ethiopians and to repel dissident attacks, blaming their lack of success on the inadequacy of armor deliveries from the US and other patrons. _____

Somalia's highest level military and political leadership readily admits during consultations with US officials that other factors critically undermine Somali military performance: a pervasive disregard for maintenance and repair that renders substantial amounts of heavy equipment operationally ineffective; the lack of adequate training for Somali troops; and the existence of leadership problems and tribal hostilities that create tension and erode morale. They continually return, however, to their concern over the lack of qualitative parity between the tanks and other equipment supplied Somalia by the West and those the Soviets provide in far greater numbers to Ethiopia. According to Embassy reporting, the Somalis have come to view the provision of additional, more modern tanks in a broader, increasingly political context that makes the issue a measure of the degree of US commitment to Mogadishu. _____

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In our view, Siad probably will face increasing disaffection from the military if he is unable to fulfill their longstanding expectations that substantial Western military assistance would result from the pro-Western policies he has promulgated. He has thus far been able to deflect discontent directed at the regime by raising hopes that his continuing efforts to obtain funding from Saudi Arabia to buy large amounts of US or European weapons would bear fruit. The decreasing likelihood of substantial Saudi aid, however, will make him more insistent in his overtures to the US for direct support. [REDACTED] 25X1

At present, Siad views the continued, deepened US involvement in Somalia as a key factor in his efforts to retain power and rebuild his military. We believe Siad is convinced that the strategic value of Somali military facilities, once the US has invested economic and political resources in their development, will provide him greater leverage. As internal pressures mount to demonstrate concrete results from his reorientation toward the West, we believe Siad may feel increasingly driven to threaten US access rights unless additional and more sophisticated arms are provided by Washington. Siad's latitude is limited, however, by his lack of real alternatives to US support. [REDACTED] 25X1

Relations with the Soviet Union

The Soviets, Siad's principal military benefactors until they switched allegiance to Ethiopia in 1977, apparently sense the possibility of political gain and have recently revived efforts to improve bilateral relations with Somalia. [REDACTED] 25X1

[REDACTED] In his Revolution Day address on 21 October, Siad noted his readiness to bring relations with Moscow "back to normal." [REDACTED] 25X1

The latest round of Somali and Soviet feelers is similar in form and content to the series of approaches we have observed on both sides since the split in 1977. Although the two countries are likely to pursue these tentative contacts, in our judgment the recent maneuvers are no more likely to lead to a significant improvement in bilateral relations than past efforts--at least as long as Siad is in power. [REDACTED] 25X1

Each side has its own reasons for the tentative contacts that have taken place in recent months. We believe the Somalis hope better

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relations would motivate the Soviets not only to limit propaganda attacks but also to encourage Ethiopia to ease its pressure on the Siad regime. In particular, Somalia probably hopes Moscow would press Ethiopia to ease or stop its support for anti-Siad Somali dissidents and to withdraw its forces from the disputed border towns of Goldogob and Balenbale. Ethiopia's occupation of these towns since mid-1982 has been an acute embarrassment to Siad and has generated military unhappiness with the government's inability to reverse the situation. We believe Siad may have also returned to his long held belief that only the Soviets, with their considerable influence in Ethiopia, can broker a political settlement in the Ogaden. Siad may also hope that discussions with the Soviets will signal to the West, especially the US, his dissatisfaction with economic and military aid levels, his displeasure with continued Western interest in improving relations with Ethiopia, and his perception that he has the opportunity--a very limited one in our view--to revive his once close relationship with Moscow. []

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25X1 The Soviets probably view reestablishment of more cordial relations primarily as a means of undermining Western influence and US strategic policies in Somalia. The Soviets may hope to influence Siad to limit or cut back US access to military facilities in Somalia and to adopt a more nonaligned foreign policy, particularly in international organizations. []

We believe, however, that neither side is willing to make a major concession on the key issue of interest to Somalia--the Ogaden. Siad will not renounce his interest in the welfare and future of the Ogadeni people, nor is he likely to discontinue his calls for Ogadeni self-determination. Siad recognizes that he would risk losing the support of the Ogadeni people in Somalia if he were to abandon their goal of casting off Ethiopian domination. Even more important, in our view, is the continuing strong sentiment in Somalia for the unification of all ethnic Somalis under one flag.* Reflecting this popular view, Siad and many of his senior officers remain committed to wresting the Ogaden from Ethiopian control and absorbing it into Somalia, despite the adverse military balance currently facing Mogadishu. []

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The Soviets, for their part, almost certainly share Ethiopian skepticism of the Somali Foreign Minister's claim at the United Nations in

* Large numbers of ethnic Somalis live in northeastern Kenya and Djibouti as well as in the Ogaden. Although Somalia's internal problems, the military superiority of Ethiopia--it too covets Djibouti--and Western efforts to induce closer Somali-Kenya relations have prompted Siad to mute Somali irredentism, it remains an important issue in Somalia. []

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September that Somalia has no territorial ambitions in the Ogaden. Moreover, Moscow is unlikely to jeopardize its close relations with Addis Ababa and its considerable investment in the Mengistu regime by pressing for greater Ethiopian flexibility regarding the status of the Ogaden. [REDACTED]

We believe that prospects for improved relations are further hindered by Somali skepticism of Soviet intentions. The Soviets have made no secret that they dislike Siad and would welcome the disintegration of his regime. Although there is little evidence of direct Soviet sponsorship of anti-Siad dissidents, we believe the Soviets at a minimum encourage Ethiopian funding and training of Somali factions that have the capacity to erode internal Somali stability. [REDACTED]

Ethiopia

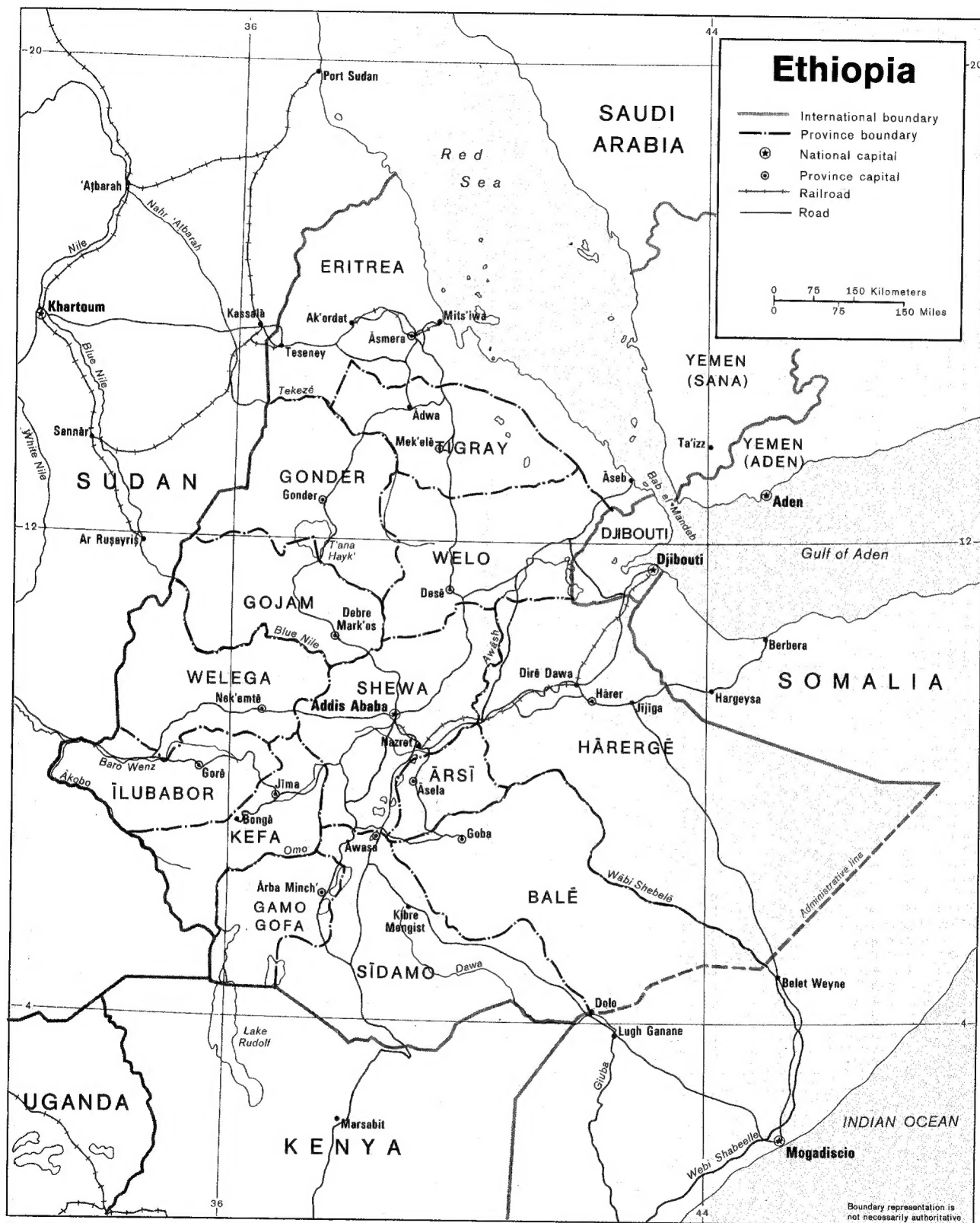
Internal Security

Emerging evidence is casting new light on the extent of military-related problems confronting the Mengistu regime. [REDACTED]

The Northern Insurgencies. The government, which has been waging a seesaw battle with separatists in Eritrea province for two decades, is now on the defensive there. The rebels control much of the countryside and have restricted government forces to Eritrea's urban areas. During the past year, the Eritrean situation remained stalemated as Addis Ababa focused more attention on its deteriorating position against increasingly aggressive insurgents in neighboring Tigray Province. Several government efforts to expand their defensive lines in Eritrea and interrupt the insurgent logistical network were blunted by the Eritreans with high government casualties. [REDACTED]

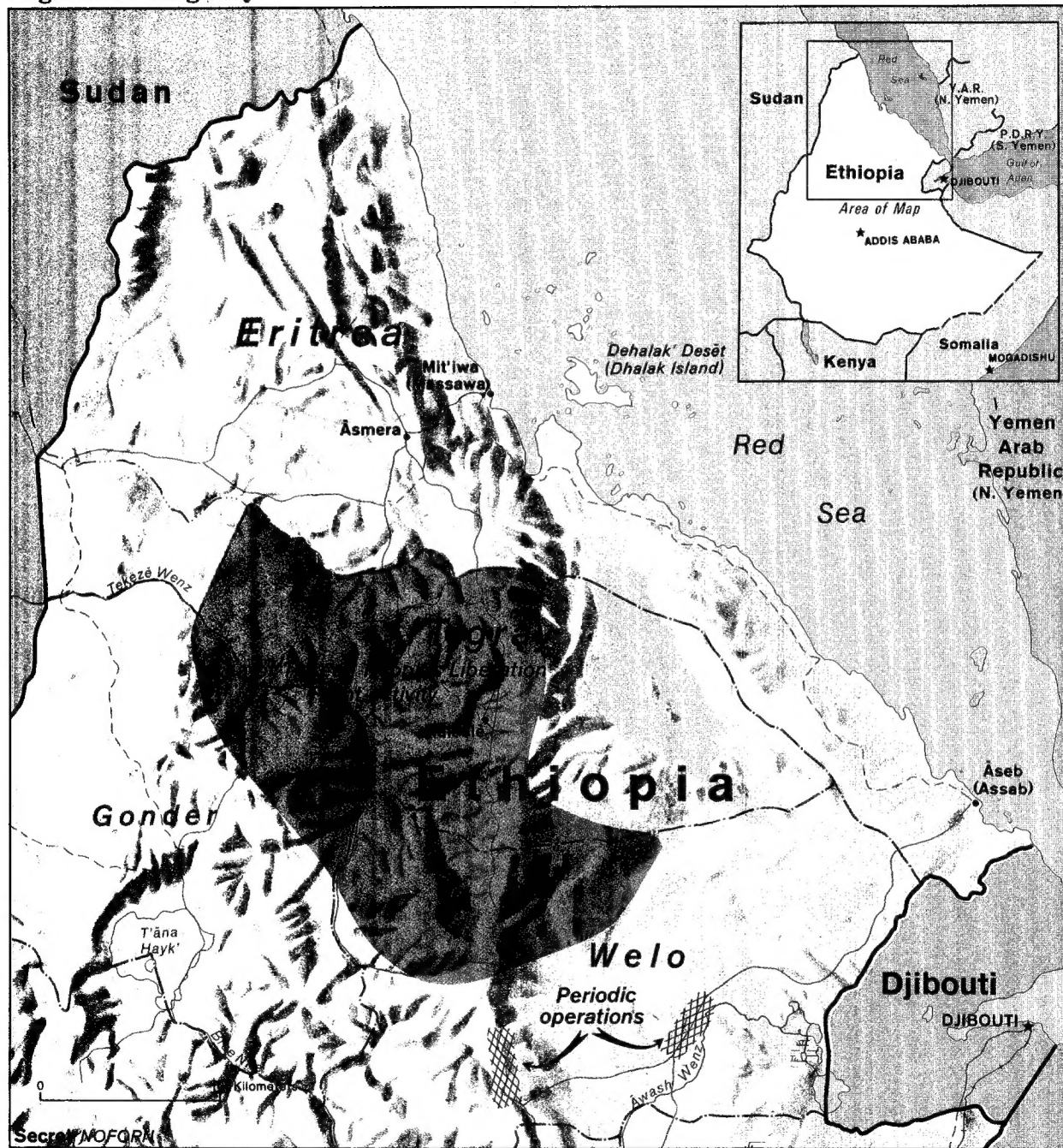
Morale among military units and provincial administrators in Eritrea has fallen during the past twelve months. Military frustration over Addis Ababa's inability to defeat the well-armed and entrenched Eritreans continues to build. Rumors of the execution of officers and enlisted men who have refused to follow orders float periodically through the capital. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] low morale and heavy casualties will continue to hinder the regime's counter-insurgency campaign. [REDACTED]



Tigrean Insurgency

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Government representatives and Eritrean officials have met several times during the past year to explore the possibility of a political settlement. Both sides, however, has been unwilling to budge from their often-stated positions--a government offer of limited autonomy and an Eritrean demand for full independence. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) since 1980 has taken advantage of Addis Ababa's preoccupation with the Eritrean rebellion to expand its military operations significantly. The guerrillas are not only challenging Addis Ababa's control of Tigray Province and threatening the supply routes to Eritrea Province, but are also expanding their operations to lightly defended areas of the adjoining of Welo and Gonder provinces. To counter this activity, the government has been forced to divert troops to defensive roles or convoy escort duty and to rely on air transport to move supplies to the north. There are now some 20,000 government soldiers with Soviet advisers in Tigray and nearby provinces. Despite several large military campaigns, the government has failed to subdue the guerrillas, largely because it has been unable to engage them in fixed battles or effectively apply its superior numbers, firepower, and mobility in the inaccessible terrain of the interior. [REDACTED] 25X1

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Concern over the unsuccessful efforts to crush the northern insurgents also is generating resentment of the Soviet military role in Ethiopia. Ethiopian military leaders have been critical of Soviet planning of the northern campaigns, and have also attributed their failure to Soviet unwillingness to provide amounts and types of weaponry adequate to the task. [REDACTED]

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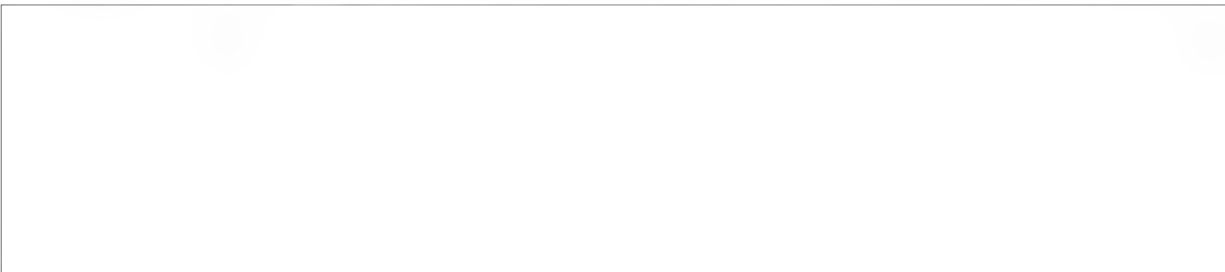


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These military realities and the fact that Soviet military assistance remains essential for the regime to withstand the insurgents and the Somalis, would, in our opinion, guarantee Moscow a large degree of political leverage with any post-Mengistu government. At most, we believe a new regime would make initial efforts to check Soviet domination of the Ethiopian domestic scene by attempting to derail or delay the formal establishment of Ethiopia's long-anticipated Marxist party. It probably would also move to adopt a more balanced foreign policy, but would not necessarily be more open to Western influence, especially in regards to Somalia. Ethiopia's senior officers share Mengistu's distrust of Somalia and his deep-seated concern over Mogadishu's irredentism.  25X1

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Initial intentions notwithstanding, the lack of policy alternatives to the problems of insurgency and Soviet dominance would leave any successor regime in an inherently unstable position, vulnerable to continuing military dissatisfaction over the same issues that brought it to power. 



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Diplomatic sources state that all Cuban troops will be withdrawn from the Ogaden and that only 2,000 to 3,000 Cubans will remain in Ethiopia, stationed near the capital. If these reports are true, as many as 4,000 combat troops could be leaving [redacted] 2,000 to 3,000 of these troops are destined for Angola. The reporting, however, does not clarify whether the non-combat troops are to be withdrawn. [redacted]

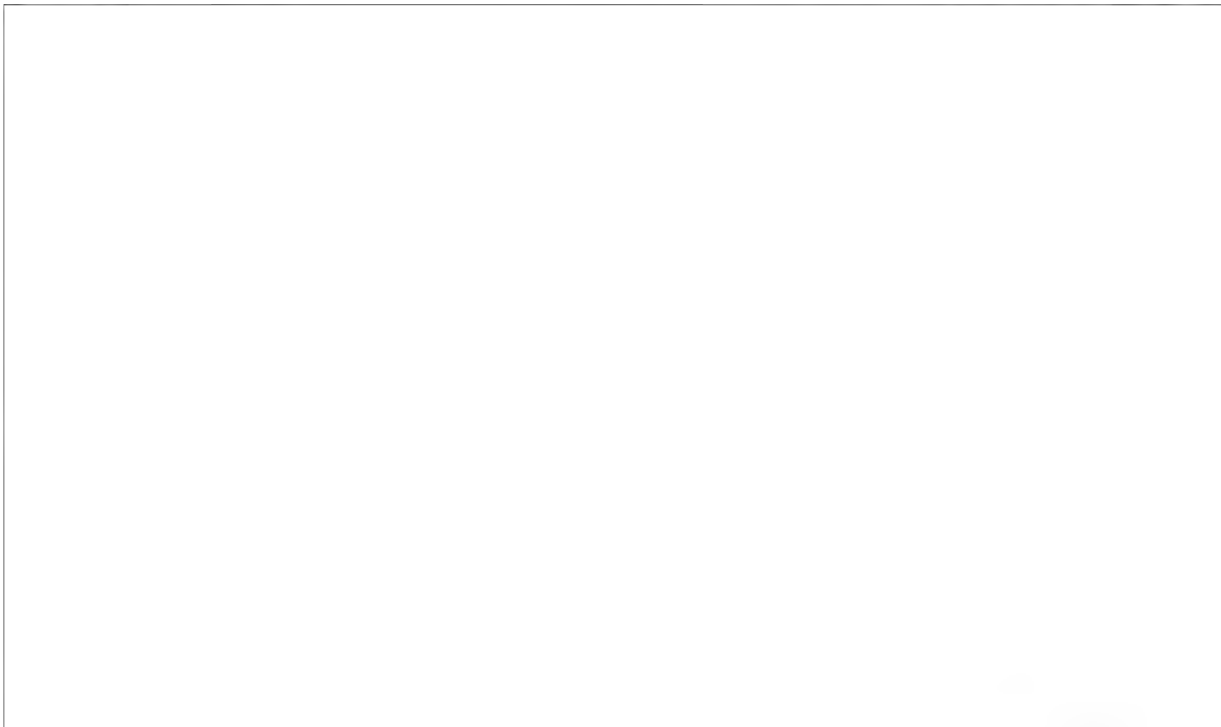
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The Soviet role in the decision also remains murky. The reported hasty arrival of Soviet General Petrov in Addis Ababa in early November fueled speculation that he had been sent to negotiate the retention of as many Cubans as possible. In any event, the reported decision to retain some 2,000 to 3,000 Cuban combat forces near the capital helps perpetuate Ethiopian dependence on Soviet-Cuban support--despite the fact that, paradoxically, Mengistu stands to enhance his image as a nationalist through his role in achieving a partial Cuban withdrawal. [redacted]

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Foreign Policy

Soviet Union. We believe that Ethiopian-Soviet bilateral relations are still strong and are unaffected by the planned withdrawal of Cuban

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troops. Mengistu remains heavily dependent on Soviet military aid to wage his campaign against insurgents in Eritrea and Tigray Provinces. The Soviets, in turn, see continued access to military facilities in Ethiopia as important to their strategic interests in the region and to counter US military access in Somalia. The Soviets also hope that the continued existence of a pro-Soviet, Marxist regime in Ethiopia will facilitate their efforts to foster leftist change in other African countries. [REDACTED]

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The relationship, however, continues to evidence occasional friction. Mengistu, though an adherent to Marxist ideology, is also an Ethiopian nationalist and is not always completely responsive to Soviet requests. [REDACTED]

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Nor have the Soviets been as cooperative or as generous with economic and military aid as the Ethiopians would like. [REDACTED]

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We believe that occasional disagreements between Moscow and Addis Ababa will recur, but we believe that mutual dependency ensures that the relationship will remain fundamentally strong. Even if Mengistu were replaced, a successor regime faced with the intractability of the insurgencies would remain dependent on Soviet aid. While a new leadership might explore the possibility of Western military aid in return for expulsion of the Soviets, we believe Addis Ababa's weak financial position

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and the unwillingness of the West to assume the Soviet role as Ethiopia's military supplier ensures a pragmatic retention of ties with Moscow. [REDACTED]

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Sudan. Traditionally tense relations between Ethiopia and Sudan deteriorated further in November when Sudanese dissidents stepped up military operations in southern Sudan. The insurgents, who receive economic, training, and military assistance from Ethiopia and Libya, launched their attacks from bases within Ethiopia. Both Libyan and Ethiopian officials almost certainly have encouraged the rebels to strike targets inside Sudan in an effort to undermine the Nimeiri regime. Sudanese claims that Cubans and Soviets are advising southern dissidents in Ethiopia have not yet been confirmed [REDACTED] although the presence of a few such advisers cannot be totally discounted. The dissidents will accept aid from almost any source. They are, however, suspicious of the Libyans and remain wary that their long-term goals do not coincide with Libyan aims. [REDACTED]

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We have not been able to confirm Sudanese claims that large numbers of Ethiopian regulars have been deployed to the border area. In fact, we believe that much of the military activity Khartoum has detected in the border region of Ethiopia's Tigray and Eritrea provinces is directed against those insurgencies rather than Sudan. The only Ethiopian military operation conducted in Sudanese territory in two years was an airstrike last month against a truck on the highway south of Port Sudan--a known supply route used by insurgents. [REDACTED]

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We believe Ethiopia and Sudan will try to prevent the outbreak of open hostilities--Ethiopia because of its own problems in combatting serious domestic insurgencies, and Sudan because it recognizes its military inferiority to Ethiopia. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Ethiopia's cooperation with Libya in its efforts to topple the Nimeiri regime will continue to poison the atmosphere. Each country, moreover, will continue to assist the dissident groups opposing its neighbor in an effort to weaken or undermine each other's regimes. [REDACTED]

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Sudan

Situation in the South

Unrest in southern Sudan--spurred by opposition among largely Christian or animist southerners to recently imposed government policies, including an emphasis on Islam--remains one of Khartoum's most pressing problems. So far, the regime has relied on force to counter dissident activity and repression to stifle political dissent. The deteriorating

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security situation in the south has diverted the government's attention from other pressing problems and stretched thin the military's limited resources. If the violence continues to escalate, Nimeiri risks alienating the armed forces no matter what course he follows. The Army appears divided between those who favor a more forceful response to dissident activity and those who fear becoming bogged down in anti-guerrilla operations. Dissident activity in the south at current levels does not necessarily affect Nimeiri's survivability. If the situation continues to unravel, however, senior officers might use Nimeiri's inability to control the situation as a pretext for removing him. []

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Nimeiri's actions have driven many southerners into opposition ranks during 1983. The regime's attempt in May to force a battalion of southern soldiers to move north caused at least several hundred to desert. Nimeiri's subsequent decision to divide the Southern Region into three administrative units was welcomed by some smaller tribes, but was opposed by the largest tribal grouping that had dominated the region previously. Opposition to Nimeiri's declaration of Islamic law in September cut across tribal lines. The largely animist or Christian southerners see Islamic law as a symbol of the central government's cultural insensitivity and a harsh reminder that their fate is controlled by Muslim Arabs. [] 25X1

Many of the southerners who deserted from the armed forces this year have joined rebels based in Ethiopia or remained in the countryside operating in semi-autonomous bands. The defection of a number of talented southern officers gave the rebel groups new strength. Disaffected southern politicians also have established contacts with the insurgents. The dissident assaults on three highly visible targets in the south in November--a military base, an oil exploration site, and the Jonglei Canal--demonstrated a greater appreciation for selecting strategic sites and gaining publicity. []

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Dissident capabilities are still limited, however, and unresolved personal and tribal rivalries have resulted in skirmishes between some factions. They are able to launch raids virtually anywhere in the Upper Nile and Bahr al Ghazal regions and seize hostages, but they lack the strength to control territory or attack major cities. Although the rebels have held small villages temporarily, the Army has regained control of such sites after a few days. [] 25X1

Nonetheless, dissident attacks have become so widespread that the Army has been forced into a reactive mode and its forces are spread thinly. Many southerners still serving in the Army are reluctant to participate in anti-dissident operations because they fear ambushes and are unwilling to fight members of their own family or tribe. Southern units also are handicapped by equipment and fuel shortages even more severe than those elsewhere in the country. []

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The armed forces have attempted to compensate for these shortcomings by relying heavily on airpower, especially helicopters. Chronic mechanical and maintenance difficulties, however, reduce the effectiveness of air operations. Khartoum has considered air or ground attacks against rebel bases in Ethiopia, but appears to have deferred that option for now. [REDACTED]

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Rebel activity is likely to continue at present or higher levels unless the government makes a dramatic gesture to assuage southern concerns. An unequivocal statement from Khartoum that Islamic law does not apply in the south would reduce somewhat the momentum of the opposition movement. Official moves back toward a unified south also would mollify some southerners. The government, however, has shown little indication that it intends to take such actions. [REDACTED]

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The unsettled security situation in the south has already delayed important foreign-supported economic development projects such as oil exploration efforts and construction of the Jonglei Canal. Southern leaders are sensitive about US security assistance to the Sudanese and there is a growing risk that the rebels increasingly will target US citizens or property in the south. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Recent Trends in the Horn of Africa

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